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for the Discussion of Results of the Last Elections,
the Political Situation, and the Tasks of the Party.

In recent elections, notably in those for works councils (Betriebsräte) we have suffered setbacks in many places. Even where we once held strong positions, we have been unable to resist the inroads of the Socialist Party (SPOe). Only in a few places have we been able to realize any progress at all.

What are the causes of this?

A satisfactory explanation is not to be found in current economic pressures, in the increased propaganda of the Socialists in connection with the 17 June (affair) in Berlin, or in the new course being taken by the people's democracies, although both the pressure and agitation (against us) have doubtless had effect. After a thorough discussion, the Politburo of the Party has come to the conclusion that the causes of recent failures are to be found in certain changes which have taken place in the existing situation, as well as in the political and organizational shortcomings of the Party itself.

The situation in Austria has changed since 1951. The conditions of struggle have also undergone change, but we have failed to take this into account either in our struggle or in our work. Until 1951, prices and salaries in Austria were on the rise, although it is well known that salaries lagged behind prices. Accordingly, the capitalistic economy was rebuilt and huge profits were made. In that period we undertook a large number of economic actions, including the strike of October 1950. The slogans and demands we promoted at that time not only expressed the needs of the masses, but in a few cases, were also possible of at least partial fulfillment. Since about 1951, the exploitation of labor has increased, principally through an intensification of the work load and a rise in productivity.

Although the situation has changed, we have stuck to our old slogans and demands. Instead of clothing our basically correct policies away in demands and slogans which appeal to the working classes, we have often allowed our demands -- however justified in themselves -- to become separated from the will of the masses. In an attempt to popularize our demands, we have combined them with a program of agitation against the policies of the Socialist leadership. Instead of concentrating on the common struggle of the working masses, no matter on what minor demands it be organized, we have attempted to unmask the Socialist Party and thereby have emphasized demands which, though basically correct, have not been suited to the common struggle. In consequence, our demands have often been left hanging in the air, and those few which have had a real appeal for the working class have only rarely been carried out, because to do so requires a common struggle.

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We must correct these mistakes, and draw the proper inferences from these experiences. It is necessary:

a) To concentrate on those economic demands which are already understandable to the broadest masses of workers, and whose fulfillment through common struggle will seem feasible to them. Let us take the example of taxes. We are indeed justified in demanding the abolition of the war income tax (Kriegslohnsteuer). Certainly many hundreds of thousands of workers would be glad to see the end of this tax. It will be recalled that the Congress of the OeGB (Austrian Federation of Trade Unions) at one time unanimously demanded its abolition. However, a majority of workers -- even those who sympathize with us -- consider this demand to be sheer propaganda, one which cannot be fulfilled in the near future. In view of the statements of the OeVP (Austrian People's Party) and the attitude of the SPOe on the tax question, it is foolish simply to base our answer (to them) on a demand for abolition of the war income tax. The main thing is to prevent a further decrease in working class incomes as the price of tax reductions for the capitalists. We must concentrate our struggle against plans to levy taxes on hitherto tax-free benefits such as overtime, night pay, reimbursement for dangerous work and Sunday pay. At the same time, we must demand that deductions from wages and salaries be decreased, and not increased. It is unquestionably possible in many factories to organize a common struggle in support of this. But to do this, it is important that --

b) The demands (to be promoted) in this common struggle be worked out in cooperation with others. It sometimes happens, but should not, that we Communists present ready-made formulas to the Socialists and the non-party workers, expecting them merely to accept them or reject them. Instead, we must strive to work out the demands of the working classes through general discussion. This will assure a stronger and more unified struggle for the fulfillment of the demands.

c) We must not overlook the slightest opportunity to take the lead in organizing a common struggle on economic and local problems, in the interests of the working class. We must remember that every common struggle will produce positive results for the working class, even though our immediate demands are not met at once. It will at least serve to reinforce the ranks of the common struggle and to create a firmer basis for later success.

From all this, it is clear that the principle aim of our efforts must be the achievement of unity of action (Aktionseinheit) among the working class. This "unity of action" need not apply to the whole country, or even to large areas. Ever less should it become solely the action of Communists. Unity of action must be built up through many limited, cooperative efforts of working groups in the villages and factories.

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The tax question

The deductions must be decreased

Demands worked out together

Unity of action on factory and local questions ✓

Unity of action is main aim ✓

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The SPOe leaders
want to enlarge
the gulf

The Socialist leadership is constantly attempting to create a gulf between the Communists and the Socialist workers. During recent months this attempt has had a certain amount of success, owing partly to our own mistakes, as described above. It is therefore all the more necessary that we do everything in our power to resist this, and to strengthen our ties with Socialist workers and functionaries in the factories and trade unions; on the basis of their own experiences, and through quiet and concrete arguments, we must win them to the common struggle. We must make it a rule to counteract Socialist Party agitation with our arguments, but at the same time to concentrate on questions which are of importance in workers' discussions.

Dissatisfaction in
the SPOe is increasing
again

The Socialist leadership seeks to create the public impression that unity reigns within the Party. Actually, this is not so. It is true that the Socialist leadership has succeeded in strengthening the Party apparatus, through which it maintains full control, so that it will (hereafter) be more difficult than ever for opposition elements to express their opinions. (But) there are various indications that dissatisfaction is on the increase among members and functionaries of the SPOe. This dissatisfaction concerns itself with economic problems, with the widening gulf that exists between the workers' representatives and the "Statesmen" and general directors, who represent capitalism, and also with (the SPOe) attitude toward reunions of former soldiers. The fact that Marxism was officially dropped at the last Party convention has caused additional dissatisfaction among old SPOe members. It is (therefore) all the more important that a proper united front policy be developed.

The fractions of
Trade Union Unity

Of great significance in the organization of a unified economic struggle among the workers are the Trade Union Unity fractions (Fraktionen der Gewerkschaftlichen Einheit). The fundamental principle on which the Trade Union Unity fractions were created was correct: To expand the small Communist fractions in the trade unions to embrace all of those who stand in opposition to union leadership. However, in practice this principle has been not only forgotten but even abused, because many fractions have failed to start from the ground up in their organization of fraction activities; they have permitted the fractions to be limited in scope, and as a result --- even in the best cases --- the fractions have consisted of Communists with one or another Socialist or non-partisan thrown in.

Extending Trade
Union Unity

Without discounting the importance of certain organizational principles, we must still place emphasis in the future on continuing attempts to expand the Trade Union Unity (group) into a wide movement which will attract all of those who, on general or specific grounds, are dissatisfied with the trade union leadership, without requiring that they necessarily join the fractions.

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In this connection, it is more important than ever that those comrades who are directly active in the trade unions be enlisted (in this effort), so that their opinions and advice on trade union problems can be heard.

II

Defense of the
Austrian national
interest

Despite all efforts, our Party has not yet been successful in convincing the broad masses of the people that the Communist Party and the organizations united in the People's Opposition (Volksopposition) are the only ones which represent the national interests of Austria. The alleviation of world tension -- a result of the Soviet Union's efforts for peace -- and the accompanying Soviet concessions in Austria have been exploited by both government parties (note: the SPOe and the OeVP) to strengthen their own positions. Through their behaviour, both indicate that they have their own party politics, and not the interests of Austria, at heart. Raab claims that the (recent) actions of the Soviet Union are the result of his policies. On the other hand, the SPOe says that the "Russian bear" has retreated because it has shouted so loudly. Of course, both are incorrect in their assumptions, even though they have succeeded in deceiving the masses and have been able to realize certain benefits from the changed political situation. In this respect the Socialist Party leaders have in many respects surpassed Raab, because, in their unscrupulous way, they have been able to exploit nationalistic and chauvinistic instincts to their advantage.

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SPOe and OeVP
policy damages
Austria

The political benefits which both parties have extracted from the honest peace efforts of the Soviet Union will not be of long duration, for sooner or later it will become clear that their policies are counter to the interests of Austria.

The threat of
West German
imperialism

Dissension within the imperialistic powers is growing. The new imperialism in West Germany, supported by the Americans, is threatening its neighbors more and more openly. Already, as is known, this has prompted a vigorous resistance movement in France. And in other countries, too, more and more opposition is developing to the imperialism of West Germany, which the Americans plan to rearm during the coming year. Our opposition to the aggressive tendencies which are growing on our western border has yet to be tested. The policy of the Soviet Union is to protect Austria from the dangers which threaten her unity, to secure democracy and to bring about her independence. In the future it will be more difficult to take refuge behind anti-Communism. Broad elements of the Austrian people will finally realize that the Soviet Union justifiably rejects, and will not permit, an Austrian State Treaty a la Adenauer, after the example of the Bonn Agreements.

The Soviet Union
favors Austrian
independence

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Such a treaty would mean the end of Austria. As in the past, the real interests of Austria coincide with those of the Soviet Union.

Today we tell all of this to our people, just as we once warned of the danger of Hitler Germany and foretold Hitler's defeat. Unquestionably the time will sooner or later come when the people, now being misled by their government and the SPOe leadership, will realize that we are right, and will support the fight for a State Treaty which is based not on an orientation toward the East or the West, but on the independence and neutrality of Austria.

III

We have also committed a number of mistakes in matters of organization. For many years we have tried by all possible means to increase attendance at membership meetings. However, we have not succeeded in bolstering attendance beyond a certain percentage of the membership. After years of fruitless effort to attract more members to the meetings, one is drawn to the conclusion that the fault simply lies with the membership (itself) --- and many comrades agree with this. But this would indicate that our members are not interested in political enlightenment, and that they should be removed from the Party and replaced with new members. But if this were done, could the new members be expected to have a higher degree of political awareness (Niveau)? Certainly not. Certain comrades wait in vain for "ready-made" Communists to join the Party.

Recruitment into the Party is the first step in the political education of a Communist. But it is only a first step. For the further development of a Communist, membership meetings are extremely important. Even though we are unable to make the membership meeting a decisive factor in the political training of a majority of the membership, it nevertheless remains a very important aid. Under no circumstances will we neglect that. On the contrary. We will reshape the membership meetings, improve them, and enforce the bolshvist principle of an equal voice for all Party members in (the formulation of) Party policy.

The membership meeting -- it is not absolutely necessary that it be held every month -- is extremely important. It must be well prepared and, as before, all members must be invited.

But between the first step, recruitment, and the membership meeting -- to which the greater portion of the membership does not come -- we need a connecting link.

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This connecting link is the Vertrauensmann* of the Party, who talks with the members, remains in constant touch with them, and in the course of the day-to-day political struggle convinces them of the rectitude of our views. His role is that of instructor of the members. We need a tightly knit, politically clear-minded and trained cadre of Vertrauensmaenner. This is in keeping with the tradition of the Austrian labor movement.

If we master the technique of strengthening members politically, then they can and will become the eyes and ears of the Communist Party among the masses, the organizational link with the people. We must only understand that what these persons say is a reflection of the opinion of the masses. If we do not understand this, then we fail to understand what is happening among the masses. For this (understanding), we need a body of Vertrauensmaenner who maintain an active political contact with the members. We need Vertrauensmaenner who have been closely associated with the members over the years and have won their full confidence. Only in this way can we secure these members and make them be of growing significance in the Party.

It is true that in their places of employment, or in their coteries of friends or perhaps under the influence of false views, many of our members have come to espouse the propaganda of the enemy. But if we can only convince them of the correct view, they can and will serve a definite purpose for the Party in their respective surrounding milieus.

Education, not
alienation, of the
members

In all of this, certain efforts are required on the part of the Vertrauensmaenner. It is important that the Vertrauensmaenner, who are better schooled politically than the rest of the members, not ignore those who are not activists, or who have not engaged in Party activities, or who do not yet have much political knowledge; instead, they should enter into political discussions with these persons. If we constantly criticize these members for doing nothing, they will be alienated and withdraw. The day comes when the accused comrade says, I quit. And then we begin all over again to recruit new members, and are right back where we started from.

The Vertrauensmann,
the pride of the
workers' movement.

The tradition of the Vertrauensmann who is in constant contact with his members is a good old tradition of the Austrian labor movement.

* The English word trustee approximates Vertrauensmann. The KPOe Vertrauensmann is the Party's lowest-level organizer, whose tasks include recruitment of new members, distribution of propaganda and general representation of the Party in both Party and non-Party circles.

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We must engineer pride in each of our Vertrauensmaenner, so that he can feel that he is the power on which the Party rests. Then we will be in a position to secure our membership; and that will open the way to an increase in attendance at membership meetings.

More social
contact

We should also attempt to encourage more social gatherings among the comrades. It should be possible to find time and opportunity for this. It is very important that social contact be firmly established among our members and functionaries, their relatives and friends.

January to March:
visit the members

In the months January to March 1954 it is our aim to solidify the body of Vertrauensmaenner throughout the Party and to establish the closest contact between Vertrauensmann and member, as described above. We begin by carrying out the measures discussed above. It will be an extraordinarily important campaign by the entire Party. During these months every member of the Party should be looked up (a free control stamp will be pasted in his membership book) and engaged in political discussion. The success of this Party effort will depend to a significant degree upon our functionaries' assuming the proper attitude toward the membership, and upon the efforts of the Vertrauensmaenner to rally their members - even though they do not come to meetings.

Overload of duties
is damaging

The organizational weaknesses in the Party concern not only the members, the Vertrauensmaenner and the meetings of the Party membership. For a long time, the lower organizations have complained of the excessive work and demands placed upon them by the central offices of the Party. Even though we may not neglect the current work in the separate areas of responsibility, we must realize that in the past we have carried on too many actions and that they have succeeded each other too rapidly. In practice, this has resulted in one campaign being nullified by another and none of them being properly exploited.

Only one
important action

Experience shows that, in addition to regular organizational Party work, not more than one special action may be scheduled at one time, and that each action needs sufficient time for preparation and execution. An action must be selected so that it has the maximum general meaning, and the Party should not be distracted from it or lured into initiating a parallel action. Naturally this does not mean that important new political events can not take precedence. When a struggle on a new question is organized, the action planned earlier has to take second place. The actions or campaigns should not, as heretofore, consist mainly of the sending of resolutions to newspapers, but should (instead) promote unity of action among the workers. In the utilization of the Socialist Party comrades we must be more bold, and we must take into consideration, naturally, that they are SPO members and not Communists.

Unity of action -
not merely resolutions

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Overcome the
difficulties

Concerning the error of overloading the Party organizations, very frequently the assignment of tasks is not realistic and the Party leadership frequently is content with, or even demands, a purposeful optimism (Zweckoptimismus) instead of concerning itself in a concrete and detailed fashion with the difficulties of the Party.

Even though a great deal is said about concentrating (our activity) in the factories, in actual practice there has been no evidence of this concentration.

Finally it must be pointed out that the Party organizations have received far too little guidance from the higher leadership, including the Secretariat of the Central Committee.*

Mass organizations
and committees

An important area of practical Party activity concerns the mass organizations and the various committees (Peace Council, People's Opposition, etc.). In this area, also, the assignment of tasks has, as a rule, been unrealistic. It is asking too much of the Party organizations to require that each set up all the mass organizations and committees in its district, or to allow the different mass organizations merely to turn over their work to the lower level Party organizations. It is much more rewarding for the lower-level (Party) organizations to concern themselves only with those mass organizations and committees which, on the basis of the concrete situation in their areas have prospect of success. If they actually develop a mass organization successfully, it serves the purpose of increasing the influence of the Party -- a purpose which is frequently overlooked today. As for VO (Volksopposition) committees, the present political situation requires that, in the future, they should be established or permitted to continue to exist only in the provinces (Laender) where the proper prerequisites (above all a non-partisanship) exist. The desperate attempts to organize VO committees and Peace Councils anywhere and everywhere are without purpose, and should be discontinued.

The work of
the leaders

From what has been said above, it follows that the work of the Party leaders on the local level must undergo revision. Our Party leaders must concern themselves much more with the day-to-day problems of the population in their districts.

* The extremely ambiguous original text of this paragraph is as follows: Schliesslich muss darauf hingewiesen werden, dass die Parteiorganisationen von den oberen Leitungen bis zum Sekretariat des Zentralkomitees weitaus zu wenig konkrete Anleitungen fuer ihre Arbeit bekommen haben.

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Only then will it be possible to fight for unity of action. The leaders should also exercise more initiative in deciding what work can be accomplished with the assets available to their organizations. Naturally, the main tasks of the Party continue to be binding on all organizations.

More effective
work

It is not intended to curtail the general activities of the Party, because our struggle on behalf of the Austrian people and the interests of the working class do not permit it. It is intended to bring the Party closer to the mass of Socialist workers through the correct political themes (Losungen), and to organize the Party work better and more successfully. It must be noted that the type of work among the masses represented by our press should be maintained, since it is one of our most important weapons for extending the influence of the Party. Of course, it is necessary to overcome the errors and weaknesses which we also have in our agitation and in the press. This has already been discussed in the Politbuero, and the Central Committee will make every effort to improve agitation and the content of the press. Above all, a more thorough argumentation of the correctness of our views is necessary. At the same time, it is also very important that local and factory-level agitation be developed much more strongly.

Improvement of
agitation and press

Too little
criticism from
below

The question arises as to why the Party leaders have not noted these errors, weaknesses and shortcomings long ago and done something about them. A basic reason for this is that criticism and self-criticism have not been developed enough within the Party. Especially the top echelons of leadership are not criticized, or are criticized very little. This is connected with the above-noted purposeful optimism which is demanded by the leaders. Comrades who timidly point out obstacles to the achievement of one or another goal are frequently called incorrigible pessimists who do not understand how to exploit the favorable political situation. Instead of encouraging criticism, even when it is only partly correct, in order to develop that part which is correct, Party leaders have often taken the reverse approach and have treated the correct part of the critique in such a casual fashion that the incorrect part of the critique makes the critic appear politically vague and unstable. The result has been that few warnings (Signale) have been received by the Party leaders and not enough notice has been taken of the few warnings which were received.

Criticism must
be encouraged

It is our duty to bring criticism and self-criticism within the Party to full development.

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The policies of
the Party are correct

The policies of the Party, its so-called general line, are correct, and have been confirmed by events. We are fighting for peace, for the independence of Austria, for a State Treaty which, on the basis of neutrality makes Austria free from dependence on American imperialism. We fight against the threat of West German imperialism. We fight against reaction and militarism (gatherings of soldiers) and for the complete democratic rights of the people. We fight for the economic interests of the working population. We seek in this respect to bring about the unity of the working class (Arbeiterklasse) to prepare a merger of all productive levels of society (Werktaetigen Schichten). That is the meaning of our struggle for unity of action; that is the purpose of the People's opposition.

We will overcome
the setbacks

The international situation continues to develop in the direction of strengthening the powers of peace. The Soviet Union and the People's Democracies will achieve new and great successes in the coming years. In France and Italy, the great general strikes of this year, and the election successes of the revolutionary workers' party, have indicated the new rise of the fighting democracy. And in Austria also, the economic and political development will bring new possibilities of struggle for the working class and for our Party. Our Party will be in a position to overcome the setbacks which it has suffered in various places in the works council elections. It will draw its ranks even tighter together, overcome errors and shortcomings and achieve great new successes.

19 November 1953

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